

Habitat III Intergovernmental negotiations in New York – First session -  
Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States – Wednesday 18 May 2016

Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair, Distinguished delegates

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its MS.

We want to thank the bureau, and especially the two co-Chairs, but also the secretariat, the policy experts and the countries and cities who have hosted regional and thematic meetings for the tremendous work invested in the preparation of the zero draft outcome document to be adopted in Quito.

We heard yesterday and the day before the strong expectations from local authorities for an ambitious New Urban Agenda. In fact, with Habitat III being the first UN conference after the successful adoption of the 2030 Agenda, it should not merely reconfirm commitments made last year by governments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The conference in Quito provides an opportunity to translate our commitments into reality. Rather, Habitat III should build on these agendas, build on these visions and commitments and drive them ambitiously forward towards implementation. The New Urban Agenda should add to these agendas an ambitious and bold vision. In the regard, on how cities, which are at the forefront of implementation of all of these inter-related agendas, can be empowered to translate these political commitments into action at their level, in an integrated and coherent way and following a place-based and people centered approach.

We believe that the New Urban Agenda should reflect the role of cities as drivers of economic, social and environmental change. It calls for a shift in the way urban development is designed and implemented at all levels.

In order to fully meet the objective of sustainable urban development, this agenda should be underpinned by a right-based approach, encompassing all human rights, promoting social inclusion and fighting inequalities. We reaffirm that gender equality, women's empowerment and women's full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital to achieve sustainable development.

The agenda 2030, in particular goal 11, already provided us with a vision for sustainable development at the local level. It already gave us the task to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, as well as to

affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all. The Agenda already alerted us on the need to reduce environmental impact of cities and on reducing disaster risk, increase resource efficiency and mitigation and adaptation to climate change. It calls for more participatory planning and management of cities, with linkages between various levels and for universal access to public spaces. The crosscutting nature of sustainable urban development surpasses the Goal 11 and therefore it is interlinked with many other SDGs and targets of the 2030 agenda. When we read the agenda carefully we realize that all of the goals and the majority of the targets can only be achieved if we enable cities to act to transform our global vision relying on enabling environments.

The New Urban Agenda that is proposed to us respond to a large extent to all these calls. We generally welcome the document as a good basis for discussion. Yet, we hope that the upcoming weeks will provide us with the opportunity to further strengthen the sections on implementation by making them more coherent and in setting clearer action-oriented priorities.

We support the general vision outlined in the zero draft and the **guiding principles** which aim at leaving no one behind, achieving sustainable prosperity and fostering ecological and resilient cities. This is in line with the major global agendas we all signed up to last year and is close to the expectations of the EU and its Member States. We are indeed calling for inclusive and safe, green and resilient, prosperous and innovative cities and for good urban governance.

**Urban governance will be key to the achieving the ambitious objective of a paradigm shift. In this regard,**

**We subscribe to the commitment to a renewed partnership between national, sub-national and local authorities,** to the promotion of decentralization policy framework, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality. Such policy framework should ensure a clear division of powers and competence and both enable local authorities to effectively implement national policies and involve them as policy makers in their own right. To this end, local authorities must be involved and consulted at all stages of the policy cycle, from planning to implementation.

**We subscribe to strategic urban and territorial planning and management.** Combined with integrated urban governance and proper land use regulation, integrated urban planning is a strong tool for decreasing the rate of urban sprawl, the loss of fertile arable soil and increasing resource and energy efficiency in urban areas. In addition, good urban design and land use planning may ensure the

provision of ecosystem services in order to make cities more resilient to flooding and to heat pressure. We also recognize the role of cities as catalysts for development beyond their administrative boundaries.

**We subscribe also to an enabling, innovative and effective financing framework** for cities. In the interest of a successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda it is crucial that all means of implementation are coordinated and firmly embedded into national legal and policy frameworks. This includes the possibility for sub-national authorities to leverage both public and private finance to support urban development and infrastructures. In this regard, it is important to encourage the formalization of the informal sector.

Additionally capacity development is a key element of this agenda. We believe that it is important to look at the commitments that are stated and match them with concrete commitments for capacity development.

Mr. / Mme. Chair,

The specific means to empower cities as drivers of sustainable development and of promoters of universal human rights will need to be further looked at. The human rights aspects of the New Urban Agenda will need to reaffirm the commitment to fulfill universal rights. We will need to find the best way to reflect this in the draft. The **follow up and review** and the strengthening of UN Habitat is also an aspect that deserves more thorough examination, bearing in mind the need to ensure coherence with the FUR of the 2030 Agenda and mindful of the fact that member states are primarily responsible for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. We are ready to engage in this conversation with all of you in the coming days and look forward to a fruitful outcome.

Thank you!